

SUPPLEMENT TO "NATURE."

A TIBETAN DICTIONARY.

A Tibetan-English Dictionary with Sanskrit Synonyms. By Sarat Chandra Das. Revised and edited by G. Sandberg, B.A., and A. W. Heyde. Pp. xxxiv+1353. (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1902.)

THE chief attraction which the Tibetan language possesses for the western reader is that it is the Latin of Central Asia, and preserves in its bulky literature the old-world lore and vestiges of early culture which the priestly schoolmen of Tibet believed to be all that was worth knowing, not only about their own country, but of the outside world, and more especially ancient India, regarding which so little is known to us. For Tibet, upon receiving its Buddhism from India in the seventh century A.D., adopted at the same time the Indian characters for the purpose of reducing its hitherto unwritten Mongolian language into writing, and forthwith translated into its new vernacular the Indian Buddhist scriptures and other works, the originals of which were afterwards destroyed by the fanatical Mohammedan invaders on the expulsion of Buddhism from India in the twelfth century A.D. From these scripts, thus preserved in their Tibetan translations, much invaluable information has already been gleaned by European scholars; but owing to a habit of the learned monks to translate most of the proper names, of persons, places, and things, root by root etymologically into the Tibetan, it so happens that without a copious Tibeto-Sanskrit lexicon to re-convert these translated names into their recognisable Indian equivalents, a great deal of the mass of information locked up in the Tibetan volumes, now accumulating in our national libraries, remains to some extent sealed.

This is what the present dictionary claims to facilitate to a greater extent than has been done by the lexicons of the pioneer Csoma, the Hungarian, the scientifically equipped Moravian missionary, Jäschke, and Père Desgodins. It has been compiled by Babu Sarat Das from vernacular dictionaries brought by him from Tibet, when he visited that country some years ago. His revisers complain that they found "the material had been put together in somewhat heterogeneous fashion hardly systematic enough for a dictionary," so that they had to take "the greatest freedom in correcting or rejecting the matter set forth in the work." This task of correction has obviously not been carried far enough, for in its published form this ponderous volume still retains serious shortcomings in the elementary requirements of a dictionary. The definitions offered are too often wanting in accuracy to be trusted, or too wanting in necessary details and useful references to be very helpful. The Sanskrit synonyms are not so numerous as they might have been, and their definitions are usually made up of indiscriminate extracts from the Sanskrit-English dictionaries of English lexico-

graphers, reproduced often without acknowledgment and with strange confusion and errors.

For instance, to refer to some of the botanical matters in the first few pages, under "Kakola," an aromatic spice, the author has taken the latter part of his definition from Wilson's dictionary without acknowledgment, and included with it part of the definition of the next following word; he also states that cardamom is "the fruit of *Cocculus indicus*," and mistakes Erandi or cubeb pepper for Erand, or the castor-oil plant. Again, "Kapi" is given in trustworthy Tibetan lexicons as the Sanskrit equivalent of "Kapiṭṭha," not "Kabitha" as stated by the Babu, and secondarily "Pithanaja," which is omitted by him. The primary meaning, therefore, is the wood-apple tree (*Feronia elephantum*) and not "resin of the juniper plant" as given by him. As secondary meanings he inserts five lines taken without acknowledgment from Wilson, and in so doing misspells each of the three botanical names, and alters "waved-leaf fig tree" into the nonsensical "mane-fig tree." In the next word, also, both the Sanskrit and botanical terms, taken unacknowledged from Wilson, are misspelt.

Again, "Chu-sing kar-po," or "the white water-tree," is absurdly stated by him to be *Aconitum ferox*, which, however, is black rather than white, and never called a "tree" by the Tibetans, to whom it is familiar. The vernacular lexicon, however, gives for "water-tree" the Sanskrit "Kadali," or "water-wood," which is the appropriate name of the watery plantain tree, and it gives the further synonym "Mochaka," or the "horse-radish-tree," which the Babu omits. Of this tree, the "Sajina" of Indian cooks, there are two varieties, namely, a red and a white kind, the latter of which is the one that has been wrongly identified with the deadly aconite by our compiler. Still another synonym for this word, "Nālam," a reed or "stalked water-plant," is incorrectly given as "the ratan" (*sic*); and the author frequently confuses cane with bamboo.

Not infrequently the precise shade of meaning is missed; thus *Rig-dsin*, which literally and invariably means "a holder of knowledge" or sage, is defined by him as "comprehension of a science (*sic*) with ease"; and seldom is any hint given of the useful literal meaning of such names as the common word for small-pox, which is euphemistically called "God's granules" in deference to the malignant disease spirit.

As instances of common words altogether omitted are *La-lis*, the respectful form of "yes," which after the mystic "*Om*" formula is perhaps the word most frequently uttered in Tibet; *Choma*, the common *Potentilla*, the root of which is eaten as a food; *pin-kyur-ma*, the kestrel, being onomatopœtic for its call; the word for "bribe," which is ethically interesting as meaning literally "a secret push."

His orthography disregards some of the accepted rules of scientific philologists, so as to give "Daipung" for the great monastery of Däpung, although no *i* occurs either in the vernacular spelling or pronunciation. We miss, too, in a dictionary of this size, which owing largely to clumsier type is

thrice the weight of Jäschke's, any illustrations of the interesting process of organic change whereby so many of the bristling consonants of the written speech have dropped out of hearing in the spoken dialects of the temperate central province, probably for physiological and climatic reasons.

Nevertheless, despite its many defects, it embodies a good deal of new material from the vernacular Tibetan lexicons which must prove suggestive to those engaged in Tibetan researches who are sufficiently advanced not to be misled by its serious mistakes.

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FINGER-PRINT IDENTIFICATION.

Guide to Finger-print Identification. By Henry Faulds, L.F.P.S., late Surgeon Superintendent of Tsukiji Hospital, Tokyo, Japan. Pp. viii+80. (Hanley: Wood, Mitchell and Co., Ltd., 1905.) Price 5s. net.

DR. FAULDS was for some years a medical officer in Japan, and a zealous and original investigator of finger-prints. He wrote an interesting letter about them in *NATURE*, October 28, 1880, dwelling upon the legal purposes to which they might be applied, and he appears to be the first person who published anything, *in print*, on this subject. However, his suggestions of introducing the use of finger-prints fell flat. The reason that they did not attract attention was presumably that he supported them by no convincing proofs of three elementary propositions on which the suitability of finger-prints for legal purposes depends. It was necessary to adduce strong evidence of the, long since vaguely alleged, permanence of those ridges on the bulbs of the fingers that print their distinctive lineations. It was necessary to adduce better evidence than opinions based on mere inspection, of the vast variety in the minute details of those markings, and finally, for purposes of criminal investigation, it was necessary to prove that a large collection could be classified with sufficient precision to enable the officials in charge of it to find out speedily whether a duplicate of any set of prints that might be submitted to them did or did not exist in the collection. Dr. Faulds had no part in establishing any one of these most important preliminaries.

But though his letter of 1880 was, as above mentioned, apparently the first *printed* communication on the subject, it appeared years after the first public and official use of finger-prints had been made by Sir William Herschel in India, to whom the credit of originality that Dr. Faulds desires to monopolise is far more justly due. Those who care to learn the facts at first hand should turn to *NATURE*, vol. xxii. p. 605, for Dr. Faulds's first letter, to vol. i., p. 518, for a second letter from him in reference to the Parliamentary Blue-book on the "Identification of Criminals," then just issued, and lastly to Sir Wm. Herschel's reply in vol. li., pp. 77-8, where the question of priority of dates is placed beyond doubt, by the reprint of the office copy of Sir William's "demiofficial" letter of August 15, 1877, to the then Inspector of Prisons in Bengal. This letter covers all

that is important in Dr. Faulds's subsequent communication in 1880, and goes considerably further. The method introduced by Sir Wm. Herschel, tentatively at first as a safeguard against personation, had gradually been developed and tested, both in the jail and in the registering office, during a period of from ten to fifteen years before 1877, as stated in the above quoted letter to the Inspector of Prisons.

The failure of Sir Wm. Herschel's successor, and of others at that time in authority in Bengal, to continue the development of the system so happily begun, is greatly to be deplored, but it can be explained on the same grounds as those mentioned above in connection with Dr. Faulds. The writer of these remarks can testify to the occasional incredulity in the early 'nineties concerning the permanence of the ridges, for it happened to himself while staying at the house of a once distinguished physiologist who was the writer when young of an article on the skin in a first-class encyclopædia, to hear strong objections made to that opinion. His theoretical grounds were that the glands, the ducts of which pierce the ridges, would multiply with the growth of the hand, and it was not until the hands of the physiologist's own children had been examined by him through a lens, that he could be convinced that the lineations on a child's hand might be the same as when he grew up, but on a smaller scale.

The literature concerning finger-prints is becoming large. An excellent index to it will be found in a memoir by Otto Schlaginhaufen, just published (*Morphol. Jahrbuch*, Bd. xxxiii., H. 4, and Bd. xxxiv., H. 1., Leipzig). But even this is incomplete, for it takes no notice of Mr. Tabor's efforts in San Francisco to obtain the official registration of the finger-prints of the Chinese immigrants, whom it was found difficult to identify otherwise. This seems to have occurred at some time in the 'eighties, possibly before them, but dates are now wanting.

Dr. Faulds in his present volume recapitulates his old grievance with no less bitterness than formerly. He overstates the value of his own work, belittles that of others, and carps at evidence recently given in criminal cases. His book is not only biased and imperfect, but unfortunately it contains nothing new that is of value, so far as the writer of these remarks can judge, and much of what Dr. Faulds seems to consider new has long since been forestalled. It is a pity that he did not avail himself of the opportunity of writing a book up to date, for he can write well, and the photographic illustrations which his publisher has supplied are excellent. The experiences of other countries ought soon to be collated with those of England, in order to develop further the art of classifying large collections of finger-prints. In Argentina, for example, their use has wholly superseded Bertillonage, and one would like to know with what success. A bureau that can deal effectively with very many thousands of cases would require a staff of particularly intelligent officials, and the tradition of dealing in the same way with certain transitional forms that are of frequent occurrence. The more highly the art of